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**My Testimony: a testimony delivered at the Connecticut Legislature to the  
Housing Committee**

Good afternoon honorable members of the Housing Committee. My name is Rashid Raji, I am a graduate student at the University of Connecticut, School of Social Work, and I also work with people with mental disabilities. I live in Hartford, Connecticut. I like to thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill. I am here to support the "Raised Bill No. 94" "*An Act Concerning Equal Treatment of Renters with Mental Disabilities.*" My recommendation is to urge that this bill pass and become a law.

**My story & rational for testimony**

Firstly, my father became mentally disabled having suffered from stroke in 1993 and passed in 1998; he was 53years old. During this time there was a need for my family to negotiate a separate housing accommodation for him, where he could be cared for, because he could no longer utilize existing facilities in the house; negotiating for a new home proved extremely difficult because of the social barriers stemming from discrimination and stigma that is

attached to people with disabilities. Access to the new home that was eventually negotiated became finally and emotionally burdensome for the family because we had to restructure the new facility to suit the condition of my father.

Secondly, experience from the people that I support reveal similar situation that my father went through and it reminds me of the difficult times, because of their own disabilities. However, in the case of the people that I support, they suffer multiple discriminations on daily basis. Homelessness among people with disabilities is high partly due to discrimination against people with mental disabilities. Having said that, in a situation in where depreciation of property values is associated with homes occupied by people with mental disabilities demonstrates one aspect of the multiple discriminations that people with mental disabilities face

. Thirdly, experiences have shown that discrimination and homelessness hurt everyone; my family was impacted severely and I had to give up going to school for a couple of years because of that. Fourthly, this bill is morally in the right direction because it equalizes the rights that people have regardless of their ability or disability.

My father's experience and the experience of the people that I support have helped me appreciate these aspects of discrimination against people with mental disability. If my family wasn't impacted and became advocate and negotiated a home for my father where he lived as a person with disability

before he passed, my father would have passed in a highly undeserving health circumstance all because we didn't have a home. The situation is not too different from the population that I support; I therefore urge that the bill be considered for passage because it will protect this vulnerable population and also help address some of these discriminations against people with mental disabilities. It will discourage acts of discrimination on the basis of one's disability and reduce homelessness among this population.

Thank you for your time and thank you for having me.